U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Little Snake Field Office
455 Emerson Street
Craig, CO 81625-1129

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

EA NUMBER: CO-100-2006-041 EA

PERMIT/ALLOTMENT NUMBER: 0501193/04082

PROJECT NAME: Renewal of the grazing lease on the North Coon Gulch Allotment #04082 for Donald O. Cook et. al.

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: See Allotment Map, Attachment 1

N. Coon Gulch #04082	T7N R90W; S1/2 NE1/4 Sec. 4.
	83 BLM acres
	111 private acres
	194 total acres

APPLICANT: Donald O. Cook et. al.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The Proposed Action and Alternatives are subject to the following plan:

Name of Plan: Little Snake Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision

Date Approved: April 26, 1989

Other Documents:

Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended (FLPMA) (43 USC 1752)

Rangeland Reform Final Environmental Impact Statement. December, 1994.

Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing in Colorado. February 12, 1997.

Results: The Proposed Action and Alternatives are consistent with the Little Snake Resource Management Plan, Record of Decision, Livestock Grazing Management Objective to improve

range conditions for both wildlife and livestock through proper utilization of key forage plants and adjusting livestock stocking rates as a result of vegetation studies.

The N. Coon Gulch Allotment #04082 is located within the Eastern Yampa River Management Unit (MU 1). The Proposed Action is in conformance with the objectives for this unit which are, collectively, open to livestock grazing unless coal, oil, and gas resources are imminent.

NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION: BLM lease #0501193 which authorizes livestock grazing on the N. Coon Gulch Allotment #04082 with an expiration date of February 28, 2006. This lease was extended for a period of one year pursuant to Section 325, P.L. 108-108, under the existing terms and conditions and will expire February 28, 2007.

This lease is subject to renewal at the discretion of the Secretary of the Interior, who delegated the authority to BLM, for a period of up to ten years. The BLM has the authority to renew livestock grazing permits/leases consistent with the provisions of the *Taylor Grazing Act, Public Rangelands Improvement Act, Federal Land Policy and Management Act,* and the Little Snake Field Office's *Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement*. This Plan/EIS has been amended by the *Standards for Public Land Health in the State of Colorado*.

The need for the Proposed Action is to implement an operational system to better utilize the resources. The spring to fall use would allow the permittee to utilize his BLM lease with private land. For one month the adjoining gate will be open for a water source forcing the cattle to utilize the uplands on both BLM and private for a limited period of use.

The following Environmental Assessment will analyze the impacts of livestock grazing on public land managed by the BLM. The analysis will recommend terms and conditions to the lease which improve or maintain public land health. The Proposed Action will be assessed for meeting land health standards.

In order to graze livestock on public land, the livestock producer (lessee) must hold a grazing lease. The grazing lessee has a preference right to receive the lease if grazing is to continue. The land use plan allows grazing to continue. This EA will be a site specific look to determine if grazing should continue as provided for in the land use plan and to identify conditions under which it can be renewed.

PUBLIC SCOPING PROCESS: The BLM Little Snake Field Office sent out a Notice of Public Scoping on September 7, 2005 to determine the level of public interest, concern, and resource conditions on the grazing allotments that were up for renewal in FY 2006. A Notice of Public Scoping was posted on the Internet, at the Colorado BLM Home Page, asking for public input on grazing permit renewals. Individual letters were sent to the affected permittees and lessees informing them that their permit and/or lease was up for renewal and requesting any information they wanted included or taken into consideration during the renewal process. The issuance of a grazing permit is being carefully analyzed within the scope of the specific action being taken, resource issues or concerns, and public input received.

BACKGROUND: The N. Coon Gulch Allotment #04082 is located approximately seven miles north of Craig, Colorado. The allotment lies west of Highway 13, in the Coon Gulch drainage. Elevations range from near 6,550 feet in the northerly portion of the allotment to near 6,300 feet along Coon Gulch drainage, which runs through a small potion of the allotment located in the southwest corner. The allotment is characterized by numerous ridges and drainages running southerly into the Coon Gulch drainage.

This allotment is surrounded by private land owned by Donald O. Cook et. al. The current lease is for spring use; however the permittee is not able to make use of it at this time. He currently summers on private land elsewhere, but he would like to come back onto his private land that is adjacent to the allotment in the fall. He would make use of the BLM by opening a gate and allowing the cattle to drift onto BLM for the month of September. The water is located on a ridge, on the private land, so they are unlikely to congregate in the bottom on BLM. In addition, the small riparian area on BLM is dried up by this time, so it is unlikely to attract cattle at this time.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Proposed Action:

Renew the ten year grazing lease for North Coon Gulch #0501193, expiring February 28, 2017, with the following changes:

From:

Allotment Name & #	Livestock Number & Kind	Dates Begin	End	%PL	AUMs
N. Coon Gulch #04082	28 cattle	05/01	05/31	100	28

To:

Allotment Name & #	Livestock Number & Kind	Dates Begin	End	%PL	AUMs
N. Coon Gulch	28 cattle	09/01	09/30	100	28

This lease is subject to the Standard and Common Terms and Conditions shown in Attachment 2.

No Action Alternative:

This alternative would maintain the existing lease season of use, and all other terms and conditions would remain the same. However, the lessee is not able to graze during this season. He has taken nonuse for the past two years.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT ANALYZED

No grazing alternative:

No livestock grazing would take place under this alternative. This alternative was eliminated from detailed study because it was not a realistic, feasible alternative, nor did it meet the requirements of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act or 1976. When the RMP was approved, it was determined that livestock grazing was an appropriate use of this land. Eliminating grazing is not analyzed because no new issues or concerns have been identified that would require this action.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT/ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES/MITIGATION MEASURES

CRITICAL RESOURCES

AIR QUALITY

Affected Environment: Air quality will not be affected by either of the alternatives.

Environmental Consequences: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Ole Olsen - 2/21/06

AREA OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

Affected Environment: Not present.

Environmental Consequences: Not applicable.

Mitigative Measures: Not applicable.

Name of specialist and date: Jim McBrayer – 2/15/06

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: The final E.I.S. for Rangeland Reform '94 notice published in the **Federal Register,** December 30, 1994 and guidance from the BLM Washington and BLM Colorado State Office's established requirements for permit renewal analyses.

Data developed here, as well as in the allotment specific analysis, was taken from the cultural program project report files, site report files, and base maps kept at the Little Snake Field Office as well as from An Overview of Prehistoric Cultural Resources Little Snake Resource Area,

Northwestern Colorado, Bureau of Land Management Colorado, Cultural Resources Series, Number 20, and An Isolated Empire, A History of Northwestern Colorado, Bureau of Land Management Colorado, Cultural Resource Series, Number 2 and Appendix 21 of the Little Snake Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement, Draft February 1986, Bureau of Land Management, Craig, Colorado District, Little Snake Resource Area. Other data sets may be used for the GIS maps developed from the Little Snake Field Office Geographic Information System (GIS) as that data is developed in future studies.

The GIS maps will be developed using USGS and BLM data that show the springs, creeks and rivers, intermittent drainage, riparian areas, and slopes greater than 30 percent. The BLM data that reflects water features potentially present in the project areas is incomplete at this time. This data represents the "best available data" that the BLM office currently has developed at this time. These maps, as well as the cultural programs current understanding of prehistoric settlement and subsistence patterns, as reflected in the archaeological record, will be used to guide initial survey efforts to locate past human activity areas in each allotment. These areas will be evaluated for potential livestock concentration impacts. The effort to identify and evaluate cultural resources in association with livestock concentration areas will take place during upcoming field seasons.

The table below is based on the allotment specific analysis developed for the allotment in this environmental assessment. Copies of the allotment specific analysis are on file at the Little Snake Field Office. The table shows cultural resources, eligible and need data, and those that are anticipated to be in each allotment. Fieldwork will be carried out in current fiscal year or in subsequent years.

Allotment Number	**Acres Surveyed at a Class III Level [1] [2]**	**Acres NOT Surveyed at a Class III Level**	**Percent -%- Of Allotment Inventoried at a Class III Level**	**Eligible or Need Data Sites – Known in Allotment (Site Numbers)**	**Estimated Sites for the Allotment** (Total Number)**	**Estimated Eligible or Need Data Sites in the Allotment (Number)**
04082	none[1]	83	0%	None	2.20	.66

(Note: *****Acres are derived from GIS allotment maps. 1. BLM only acres or 2. BLM and other acres in the allotment. See allotment specific analysis form. **Estimates of site densities are based on known inventory data. Estimates represent a minimum figure which may be revised upwards based on future inventory findings.)

Environmental Consequences: Monitoring of the previous years range permit renewal environmental documents, FY98, FY99, FY2000, FY01, FY02, FY03, FY04, and FY05 has been carried out for some of the known eligible and need data sites identified in the cultural records review. These reports represent three field seasons of evaluation work on the eligible and need data sites. The fieldwork conducted during 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2005 identified impacts

to some of the cultural resources being evaluated. This information is covered in the following reports:

Keesling, Henry S. and Gary D. Collins, Patrick C. Walker
2000 Cultural Resource Evaluation of Known Eligible and Need Data Sites within Range Allotments for Range Permit Renewal EA's FY98 and FY99. Bureau of Land Management, Little Snake Field Office, Craig, Colorado. Copy on file at that office.

Collins, Gary D., and Patrick C. Walker, Sam R. Johnson, Henry S. Keesling
2001 **Addendum to** Cultural Resource Evaluation of Known Eligible and Need Data Sites within Range Allotments for Range Permit Renewal EAs FY98 and FY99, **Range Permit Renewal EA's FY2000 and FY2001.** Bureau of Land Management, Little Snake Field Office, Craig, Colorado. Copy on file at that office.

Collins, Gary D. and Ryan J. Nordstrom, Henry S. Keesling
2002 **The Second Addendum** to The Cultural and Need Data Sites Within Range Allotments for Range Permit Renewal EA's FY98, FY99, FY00. FY01, and FY02. Bureau of Land Management, Little Snake Field Office, Craig, Colorado. Copy on file at that office.

Collins, Gary D. and Henry S. Keesling
2003 **The Third Addendum** to The Cultural and Need Data Sites Within Range Allotments for Range Permit Renewals EA's FY98, FY99. Bureau of Land Management, Little Snake Field Office, Craig, Colorado. Copy on file at that office.

Collins, Gary D. and Henry S. Keesling
2005 T**he Fourth Addendum** Range Permit Renewal FY04 and FY05 to The Cultural Resource Evaluation of Known Eligible and need Data Sites Within Range Allotments for Range Permit Renewal EA's FY00, FY01, FY02, FY03. BLM 10.27.05. Bureau of Land Management, Little Snake Field Office, Craig, Colorado. Copy of file at that office.

BLM has committed to a ten year phased evaluation being conducted for cultural resources that takes into account identified livestock concentration areas and the cultural resources that are either eligible and/or need data and to carrying out mitigation on cultural resources that require this action. The phased monitor and mitigation approach will mitigate identified adverse effects, significant impacts and data loss, (NHPA Section 106, 36CFR800.9; Archaeological Resource Protection Act 1979; BLM/Colorado SHPO Protocol 1998; NEPA/FLPMA requirements) to an acceptable level for known eligible and need data cultural resources.

Mitigative Measures: Standard Stipulations for cultural resources are included in Standard Terms and Conditions for the grazing permit (Attachment 2).

Allotment Specific Stipulations for this EA:

1. GIS maps based upon stream course features and springs from the 7.5 minute USGS maps and BLM best available riparian/spring data in this office will be used to initially establish evaluation areas for livestock concentrations. Current archaeological understanding of settlement and subsistence patterns for prehistoric cultural resources will be applied to these maps. Identified livestock concentration areas will be field evaluated. Those areas with no livestock impacts but with potential for cultural resources will under go the same Class III survey discussed below. This survey will be conducted documenting archaeological resources which may be impacted if grazing practices change in the future. Identified concentration areas that exhibit livestock impacts will have the following cultural surveys:

> Springs, riparian areas, streams or creeks, and intermittent drainage will have a Class III survey in the area of concentration that includes an additional 50 feet around the impacted area. Identified cultural resources will be recorded to include the total site area and mitigation developed.
>
> Springs will have a Class III survey in the area of concentration and include an additional 50 feet around the impacted area. Identified cultural resources will be recorded to include the total site area and mitigation developed.

2. GIS maps showing slope potential, 30% or greater, where rock art and rock shelters are predicted to occur, will be used to initially establish evaluation areas for Class III survey. These areas will be evaluated for livestock concentrations. Identified concentration areas will have the following cultural surveys performed:

> Potential rock shelters, rock art areas will be evaluated to see if cultural materials are present. When cultural resources are identified the site will be recorded and appropriate mitigation will be developed.

3. Previously identified sites, table above, and new sites recorded and evaluated as eligible and/or need data during other project specific Class III survey will need to be evaluated and monitored too. Initial recording of new sites and re-evaluation of the known sites will establish current condition of the resource and help in developing a monitoring plan for all sites. Some sites will have to be monitored more often than others. Sites that are impacted by grazing activities will need further monitoring, physical protection or other mitigative measures developed.

4. Site monitoring plans, other mitigation plans, will be developed and provided to the Colorado State Historic Preservation Officer in accordance with the Protocol (1998) and subsequent programmatic agreements regarding grazing permit renewals.

Conducting Class III survey(s), monitoring, and developing site specific mitigation measures will mitigate the adverse effects, data loss, and significant impacts (NHPA Section 106, 36CFR800.9;

Archaeological Resource Protection Act 1979; BLM Colorado and Colorado SHPO Protocol 1998; and NEPA/FLPMA requirements) to an acceptable level.

The Colorado State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) agreed with the Bureau of Land Management, Colorado, (BLM) that the BLM could issue its Range Renewal Permits with the proposed Cultural Resource Management actions, monitoring known eligible and need data sites and conducting Class III and/or modified Class III surveys on selected areas of BLM lands within in a ten year time frame (Cultural Matrix Team Meeting 26 January 1999, Colorado BLM State Office).

The Little Snake Field Office will initiate the monitoring of known eligible and need data sites the first field season following the issuing of the permit if possible. This survey will be based upon an accepted, BLM and SHPO, research design that will establish criteria for evaluation of the sites for livestock impacts and any needed mitigation and future monitoring needs

Name of specialist and date: Henry S. Keesling – 02/21/0

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Affected Environment: The project would not directly affect the social, cultural, or economic well being and health of Native American, minority or low-income populations. The project area is relatively isolated from population centers, so no populations would be affected by physical or socioeconomic impacts from the project.

Environmental Consequences: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Louise McMinn - 02/14/06

FLOOD PLAINS

Affected Environment: A small floodplain is present within the south west corner of the Coon Gulch, less then a 6’x6’ area within the allotment.

Environmental Consequences: The proposed action to change the grazing season to September would not change the floodplain within Coon Gulch. Grazing on grasses and sedges would be deferred until after the growing season and floodplain soil would be dry and less susceptible to trampling and compaction. Cattle would utilize the water source on uplands on private.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Ole Olsen - 02/21/06

INVASIVE, NONNATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: Cheatgrass and yellow allysum are known to occur on this allotment. Whitetop, houndstongue, black henbane, Canada thistle, and other biennial thistles are known to occur in this area as well. There is the potential for noxious weeds, such as dalmatian toadflax, knapweeds, and others, to exist and spread in these areas.

Environmental Consequences: Vehicular access to public land for grazing operations, livestock and wildlife movement, as well as wind and water can cause invasive species to spread into new areas. Surface disturbance activities associated with livestock concentration can increase weed presence. Land practices and land uses by the livestock operator and their weed control efforts will largely determine the identification and potential occurrence of weeds within the allotment. The change in season of use from spring livestock use to fall livestock use should provide an opportunity for native vegetation to out compete invasives such as cheatgrass. The use of best management practices and mitigation of livestock disturbance can facilitate control of invasive species and reduce the potential of long term infestation of annual and noxious weed species. All principles of Integrated Pest Management would be employed to control noxious weeds on public lands.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Curtis Bryan - 02/21/06

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: The North Coon Gulch Allotment provides both foraging and nesting habitat for a variety of migratory birds. Sagebrush stands in the allotment provide habitat for two birds listed on the USFWS's Bird of Conservation Concern List, sage sparrow and Brewer’s sparrow.

Environmental Consequences: Livestock grazing under either the proposed action or the no action alternative within this allotment would not likely have a direct negative impact on any of the birds of conservation concern. Both the proposed action and the no action alternative have little to no potential to result in take of any migratory birds within this allotment.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Desa Ausmus – 02/16/06

NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS CONCERNS

Letters have been sent to the Uinta and Ouray Tribal Council, Southern Ute Tribal Council, Ute Mountain Utes Tribal Council, and the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs on 17 November

2004 and 11 January 2006. The letters discussed the range permits that the BLM would be working on in FY05/FY06 and FY07. Comments received from the Tribal Council's did not foresee any impacts. No other comments were received (Letters on file at the Little Snake Field Office, Craig, Colorado.)

Name of Specialist and date: Henry S. Keesling – 2/21/06

PRIME & UNIQUE FARMLANDS

Affected Environment: None

Environmental Consequences: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Ole Olsen – 02/21/06

T&E SPECIES - SENSITIVE PLANTS

Affected Environment: There are no BLM sensitive plants species present on the North Coon Gulch Allotment #04082.

Environmental Consequences: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim – 02/21/06

T&E SPECIES – ANIMALS

Affected Environment: The allotment provides habitat for two BLM sensitive species, the greater sage grouse and Columbian sharp-tailed grouse. The allotment does not provide nesting or brood rearing habitat for either species.

Environmental Consequences: No Federally ESA listed animal species would be affected by the proposed action or the no action alternative. A site visit to the allotment showed the sagebrush community in good condition, providing adequate forage and cover for grouse during all seasons. The proposed change in the season of use is unlikely to have adverse impacts to either grouse species or their habitat within the allotment. Under the no action alternative, the grazing system would not change, and the habitat would continue to provide suitable habitat for sage grouse and Columbian sharp-tailed grouse.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Desa Ausmus - 02/16/06

T&E SPECIES – PLANTS

Affected Environment: There are no federally listed threatened or endangered plants species present on the North Coon Gulch Allotment #04082.

Environmental Consequences: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim – 02/21/06

WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID

Affected Environment: None

Environmental Consequences: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: D. Johnson - 02/14/06

WATER QUALITY – GROUND

Affected Environment: The BLM area affected by the proposed action may have some fresh ground water aquifers.

Environmental Consequences: Due to the limited number and the limited time of livestock grazing, there will be no adverse impacts to ground water quality within the proposed action area. The proposed action will be conducted in accordance with existing Colorado laws for water quality. Specifically, all permit activities must comply with the applicable water quality regulations in The Colorado Water Quality Control Act, and they will be in conformance with the classifications and numeric standards for water quality established by the Colorado Water Quality Control Commission.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Fred Conrath - 02/14/06

WATER QUALITY - SURFACE

Affected Environment: Coon Gulch is an ephemeral tributary to Fortification Creek. Fortification Creek and its tributaries were last assessed Oct. 23, 2001 and were determined to fully support the designated uses. The classified designated uses for Fortification Creek are: Aquatic Life Warm 1, Recreation Primary Contact and Agriculture. Tributaries to Fortification

Creek must have water quality that supports Aquatic Life Warm 2, Recreation Primary Contact and Agriculture.

Environmental Consequences: Water quality will likely continue to be met for Fortification Creek and Coon Gulch regardless of the alternative selected.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Ole Olsen - 02/21/06

WETLANDS/RIPARIAN ZONES

Affected Environment: Coon Gulch supports an herbaceous wetland system with riparian sedges and grasses but just a small portion of the gulch is present within the allotment. No official Proper Functioning Condition Assessment has been conducted on Coon Gulch.

Environmental Consequences: The soils will generally be dry in September and riparian plants will have most of the growing season completed prior to grazing. Sedges and rushes will be less palatable in the fall and less likely to be grazed, allowing for good stubble and ground cover for the following spring runoff.

Under the No Action Alternative spring grazing would occur, but there would be a good portion of the growing season left for plant regrowth following the grazing period. Some additional trampling on wet and moist soils may result with spring grazing.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Ole Olsen - 02/21/06

WILD & SCENIC RIVERS

Affected Environment: Not present

Environmental Consequences: Not applicable

Mitigative Measures: Not applicable

Name of specialist and date: Jim McBrayer - 02/15/06

WILDERNESS, WSAs

Affected Environment: Not present

Environmental Consequences: Not applicable

Mitigative Measures: Not applicable

Name of specialist and date: Jim McBrayer - 02/15/06

NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

SOILS

Affected Environment: Soils are well covered by sagebrush and grass species.

Environmental Consequences: Both the No Action and the Proposed Action Alternatives incorporate a short duration of use on the public lands, which will benefit perennial vegetation and maintain adequate vegetative cover to protect the soils.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Ole Olsen - 02/21/06

VEGETATION

Affected Environment: The Coon Gulch Allotment is predominantly a sagebrush-grass community with a wide variety of species. Common forage found within the allotment include western wheatgrass, bluebunch wheatgrass, squirreltail, smooth brome, redtop, Indian ricegrass, Sandberg bluegrass, needleandthread, Kentucky bluegrass, and foxtail barley. Other plants present which provide forage, habitat, or watershed value include, riparian sedges, fringed sagebrush, black sage, bitterbrush, green rabbitbrush, rubber rabbitbrush, longleaf phlox, and scarlet globemallow.

Plant vigor and diversity on grasses and forbs, along with a variety of age classes of sagebrush was noted throughout the allotment. There appears to be little difference between the qualities of plant communities on public vs. private land within the allotment. Cheatgrass and Canada thistle were present but not overly abundant.

Environmental Consequences: The Proposed Action would allow a later season of use on the pasture containing public land. This would allow better forage utilization due to the water being located on private lands and cattle having to walk uphill to water. The short season of use during the dormant season would benefit vegetation if utilization limits are met. The amount of public land involved is small in relation to private lands, so livestock would not be expected to be on BLM most of the time.

The No Action Alternative has actually been no grazing, as the lessee has not been able to make use of the BLM with its current season of use. This would contribute to the good conditions on the allotment. If the lessee were to make use during the month of May, certain plants could be harmed by growing season use occurring at the same time every year. However, the duration of

grazing is only for one month, so with adequate spring precipitation, there should be adequate time for plant re-grow once livestock are removed.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Amy Ruhs - 01/19/06

WILDLIFE, AQUATIC

Affected Environment: Coon Gulch, an ephemeral stream and the associated riparian vegetation, provide limited habitat for aquatic wildlife species.

Environmental Consequences: A visit to the allotment in 2005 showed the small amount of riparian habitat to be in good condition, providing limited habitat for aquatic wildlife species. This trend would be expected to continue under the No Action Alternative. The Proposed Action would benefit aquatic wildlife by improving the small amount of riparian vegetation along Coon Gulch with the later use dates. Because grazing will be limited to the fall for one month when there is no water in the riparian system. Cattle will not be drawn to the riparian area because of the lack of water therefore utilizing the uplands for their water source.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Desa Ausmus - 02/22/06

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL

Affected Environment: The North Coon Gulch Allotment provides habitat for big game species as well as small mammals, reptiles and birds. Mule deer and pronghorn antelope utilize the allotment year round, while elk utilize the allotment during the winter months.

Environmental Consequences: A visit to the allotment in 2005 showed the vegetative community to be in good condition, providing suitable and productive habitat for terrestrial wildlife. The proposed change in the season of use is unlikely to have adverse impacts to terrestrial wildlife species or their habitat. The Proposed Action would leave ample vegetation to continue to provide suitable winter range for elk. Under the No Action Alternative, the grazing system would not change, and the habitat would continue to provide suitable habitat for terrestrial wildlife species.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Desa Ausmus – 02/16/06

OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS: For the following elements, those brought forward for analysis will be formatted as shown above.

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Access		LM 02/14/06	
Fluid Minerals		FC 2/14/06	
Forest Management		AR 3/23/06	
Hydrology/Ground		FC 2/14/06	
Hydrology/Surface		OO 2/21/06	
Paleontology		RE 2/14/06	
Range Management		AR 1/19/06	
Realty Authorizations	LM 2/14/06		
Recreation/Travel Mgmt		RS 02/21/06	
Socio-Economics		LM 2/14/06	
Solid Minerals		RE 2/14/06	
Visual Resources		JM 2/15/06	
Wild Horse & Burro Mgmt	VD 2/3/06		

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY: Off-highway vehicle travel, primarily by hunters, is the most prevalent cumulative impact unrelated to livestock grazing. These impacts on public land are somewhat restricted within the allotment due to private land surrounding the public land parcels. This results in limited public access to parcels that are not crossed by county roads. This land pattern has restricted the spread of noxious and invasive weed species, as well as limiting impacts from other use.

STANDARDS

PLANT AND ANIMAL COMMUNITY (animal) STANDARD: A visit to the allotment in 2005 showed that this standard was met on the allotment. The vegetative community has very high vigor and provides productive habitat for a variety of big game, small mammal, raptor and songbird species. Both the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative would continue to meet this standard.

Name of specialist and date: Desa Ausmus – 02/16/06

SPECIAL STATUS, THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES (animal) STANDARD: The allotment provides habitat for greater sage grouse and Columbian sharp-tailed grouse. The allotment is currently in excellent condition, providing suitable habitat for both species. Both the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative should continue to meet this standard.

Name of specialist and date: Desa Ausmus - 02/16/06

PLANT AND ANIMAL COMMUNITY (plant) STANDARD: An interdisciplinary team conducted a Landscape Health Assessment in July of 2005 and found this standard to be met. The vegetative community was productive and contained a high diversity of species. Both the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative would allow this standard to continue to be met in the future.

Name of specialist and date: Amy Ruhs - 01/23/06

SPECIAL STATUS, THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES (plant) STANDARD There are no federally listed threatened or endangered or BLM sensitive plant species present on the North Coon Gulch Allotment #04082. This standard does not apply.

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim – 02/21/06

RIPARIAN SYSTEMS STANDARD: The riparian standard for healthy rangelands will be met with implementation of either the Proposed Action or No Action Alternatives. Each of the grazing schedules is for a short duration of time. The wetland system in Coon Gulch will have a sufficient regrowth following grazing under the No Action Alternative or is not expected to be highly utilized in the fall.

Name of specialist and date: Ole Olsen - 02/21/06

WATER QUALITY STANDARD: The water quality standard for healthy rangelands will be met with implementation of either the Proposed Action or No Action Alternatives. Runoff from snowmelt and summer storms will drain from the North Coon Gulch Allotment into stream segments that are presently supporting classified uses. No stream segments are listed as impaired.

Name of specialist and date: Ole Olsen - 02/21/06:

UPLAND SOILS STANDARD: The upland soil standard for healthy rangelands will be met with implementation of either the Proposed Action or No Action Alternatives. Each alternative would be a short duration of livestock use that will allow for the plant community to provide good cover on the upland soils.

Name of specialist and date: Ole Olsen - 02/21/06

PERSONS/AGENCIES CONSULTED: Uintah and Ouray Tribal Council, Colorado Native American Commission, Colorado State Historic Preservation Office, Donald O. Cook ETAL.

MITIGATION MEASURES:

BLM commitments (cultural)

1. GIS maps based upon stream course features and springs from the 7.5 minute USGS maps and BLM best available riparian/spring data in this office will be used to initially establish evaluation areas for livestock concentrations. Current archaeological understanding of settlement and subsistence patterns for prehistoric cultural resources will be applied to these maps. Identified livestock concentration areas will be field evaluated. Those areas with no livestock impacts but with potential for cultural resources will under go the same Class III survey discussed below. This survey will be conducted documenting archaeological resources which may be impacted if grazing practices change in the future. Identified concentration areas that exhibit livestock impacts will have the following cultural surveys:

> Springs, riparian areas, streams or creeks, and intermittent drainage will have a Class III survey in the area of concentration that includes an additional 50 feet around the impacted area. Identified cultural resources will be recorded to include the total site area and mitigation developed.
>
> Springs will have a Class III survey in the area of concentration and include an additional 50 feet around the impacted area. Identified cultural resources will be recorded to include the total site area and mitigation developed.

2. GIS maps showing slope potential, 30% or greater, where rock art and rock shelters are predicted to occur, will be used to initially establish evaluation areas for Class III survey. These areas will be evaluated for livestock concentrations. Identified concentration areas will have the following cultural surveys performed:

> Potential rock shelters, rock art areas will be evaluated to see if cultural materials are present. When cultural resources are identified the site will be recorded and appropriate mitigation will be developed.

3. Previously identified sites, table above, and new sites recorded and evaluated as eligible and/or need data during other project specific Class III survey will need to be evaluated and monitored too. Initial recording of new sites and re-evaluation of the known sites will establish current condition of the resource and help in developing a monitoring plan for all sites. Some sites will have to be monitored more often than others. Sites that are impacted by grazing activities will need further monitoring, physical protection or other mitigative measures developed.

4. Site monitoring plans, other mitigation plans, will be developed and provided to the Colorado State Historic Preservation Officer in accordance with the Protocol (1998) and subsequent programmatic agreements regarding grazing permit renewals.

SIGNATURE OF PREPARER:

DATE SIGNED:

SIGNATURE OF ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEWER:

DATE SIGNED:

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1, Allotment Map
Attachment 2, Standard and Common Terms and Conditions

FONSI

The environmental assessment (EA# CO-100-2006-041) analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action, has been reviewed. With the implementation of the attached mitigation measures there is a finding of no significant impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action.

1. Beneficial, adverse, direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts have been disclosed in the EA. Analysis indicated no significant impacts on society as a whole, the affected region, the affected interests or the locality. The physical and biological effects are limited to the Little Snake Resource Area and adjacent land.

2. Public health and safety would not be adversely impacted. There are no known or anticipated concerns with project waste or hazardous materials.

3. There would be no adverse impacts to regional or local air quality, prime or unique farmlands, known paleontological resources on public land within the area, wetlands, floodplain, areas with unique characteristics, ecologically critical areas or designated Areas of Critical Environmental Concern.

4. There are no highly controversial effects on the environment.

5. There are no effects that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk. Sufficient information on risk is available based on information in the EA and other past actions of a similar nature.

6. This alternative does not set a precedent for other actions that may be implemented in the future to meet the goals and objectives of adopted Federal, State or local natural resource related plans, policies or programs.

7. No cumulative impacts related to other actions that would have a significant adverse impact were identified or are anticipated.

8. Based on previous and ongoing cultural surveys, and through mitigation by avoidance, no adverse impacts to cultural resources were identified or anticipated. There are no known American Indian religious concerns or persons or groups who might be disproportionately and adversely affected as anticipated by the Environmental Justice Policy.

9. No adverse impacts to any threatened or endangered species or their habitat that was determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act were identified. If, at a future time, there could be the potential for adverse impacts, treatments would be modified or mitigated not to have an adverse effect or new analysis would be conducted.

10. This alternative is in compliance with relevant Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and requirements for the protection of the environment.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:

DATE SIGNED: